

REWRITE



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SHOULD WRITERS "GIVE" THEMSELVES AWAY?

The problem of whether it is good business for the writer to "give away" his stuff is a very real and troublesome one. It often affects the professional writer just as much, if not more, than his less experienced competitor. This is because he is better known and therefore, an easier mark and, perhaps, a better touch. His very reputation and big name is worth more to those who seek to use his mss. for their own purposes. And they're unconsciously selfish because they think he is established and successful, and so quite easily can toss off 1,000 words without any trouble at all. This is of course erroneous because the demands on his energy are higher and he should be cashing in on all of the apprentice years.

The first type of writer one very naturally thinks of in this connection is the poet. There are so few really well paying markets, and these buy relatively speaking so extraordinarily few poems, that the problem is a vital one. Only by pursuing all the contest opportunities and the low pay magazines can a poet make anything at all from his wares. A poet can give away his mss. for years and achieve wide publication, yet remain almost unknown so far as the better critics are concerned.

For the poet then, the first interest has to be whether (1) publication will increase his prestige, and (2) bring him a wider audience. There is compensation in both these directions. The little magazines offer a poet an opportunity to practice his craft and to get audience reaction. In them he builds against the time of his being able to issue (preferably not at his own expense!) a collected edition of his work. Moreover, a poet should always figure in the fact appearance in the non-pay magazines sometimes wins him (1) a worthwhile reprinting in a bigger and more profitable publication; (2) help him to sell his books of poetry; and (3) secure him profitable speaking or reading engagements. (And never overlook the profit in an "autographing party", where the sale of books may pay for an hour or two given up to speaking for nothing.)

A writer should not take this matter of a speaking engagement here, there and all over too lightly. I know many social and supposedly professional clubs that make an utter nuisance of themselves by asking celebrities to appear (often on a crowded, overloaded program) free of charge. The writer thus helps the club to earn its dues at the expense of time in which he might be writing and energy he might be devoting to research. Many publishers burn up their authors in an expensive (for the author) round of personal appearances. Such time-consuming parties may have by-product value for a writer, but he should consider all the various angles—and very carefully. Learn to use the public platform, not be used by it.

Many writers are too easy with themselves. I know writers who are among the worst sinners in the audiences at the clubs I've just mentioned. It is very simple to belong to a flock of clubs and call yourself a writer... It takes guts to lock yourself in a room by yourself with no sure-thing assignments and write because you intend to be a writer. It takes no difficult expenditure of energy to pay dues and get yourself entangled in lots of time consuming "activities". And then it suddenly dawns on you that there is no time to write and old age has opened your door. I recall the woman who once told me she'd decided to be sensible and write. She'd reduced her clubs to the irreducible minimum, 14!

The same thing is true as regards the magazines that writers permit themselves to do pieces for simply because they know that if they comply with the conditions of length & wait their turn, they will certainly get in to print. There is nothing against publications of this type. You pay a very inexpensive subscription fee and get a chance to be seen and to practice your craft. Such magazines fill a very useful purpose. But I have seen writers in those periodicals, who were appearing in them as neophytes ten years or more ago. It is time they kicked themselves upstairs.

Every writer should early make a list for himself of those magazines that he considers his "rejection books". In other words, they should receive only the mss. he cannot sell elsewhere. And even these should be culled, and edited very carefully. I heard of a big name author the other day, who "disowns" two of his early books. He considers them immature early indiscretions. It is not insulting to an editor to give him only cast-offs because he knows by reason of his public he is doomed to a certain consistent level. He may be doing a good job providing his readers with the kind of literature they desire. Like a good teacher, he is proud of writers whom he started up the ladder. He must grow or he will "die". But always within certain limits. The writer on the contrary, must go up the ladder by developing his talent. It's bad for him to "give away" his talents over a long period. The competition of fighting, struggling to please new editors, more discriminating readers is part of his life.

The reprint problem is one serious angle, which every writer must face in relation to this matter of giving himself away. It's one thing to have a poem be reprinted around the world. Many magazines and newspapers cannot afford to pay. But a writer should be business-like and demand payments for "reprint" rights wherever there is a capacity to pay. He should do this for himself and for other writers. If he does not, he will become the well known easy mark. He also makes it more difficult for all writers to earn a living. And finally he gives competition to his well paying friends among the editors, and to his own selling wares. That's not a smart trick.

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PUT VALUES	William E. Harris,	PEACE
INTO YOUR	Elva Ray Harris,	IS YOUR
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WHICH SHALL IT BE, AMERICA?

The greatest danger to our American democratic culture and ideals is not the Russian autocracy nor their Marxian philosophy—both of which history has shown us often in the past to be unworkable and self-destructive. No, the real danger is our dependence upon materialism and the false security engendered by accumulating a horde of dollar notes that are steadily deteriorating in real values.

There is nothing wrong with the "American way of life" that can't be cured by courage and realistic imagination. But our ridiculous emphasis and re-emphasis on "property-rights" as against "human-rights" is taking us straight down the road to financial, and moral bankruptcy. President Henry M. Wriston of Brown University said it all in a few words recently at the quarterly meeting the New England Council held at York Harbor, Me.

"Insistence on profits (dollars, ed.), as a primary business objective," Pres. Wriston stated, "is as effectively hostile to democracy as the Russians. Profits are an incentive to the primary aim, which is the supplying of human needs."

"Fear inspired by the Russians is the forerunner of repressive laws...and fear of the ideas that seem radical. I speak for the American system, which is built upon the thesis that conformity is not the way of 'progress', that individuality is the mark of human dignity."

Those are sentiments that REWRITE has expressed for a number of years. We don't believe for one minute that we know everything. We are not infallible. But this we know for a fact: that some of the cornerstones in our present relations among ourselves and those nations overseas are economically contradictory and indefensible for any liberty-loving people.

In our foreign trade we want dollars, not goods in exchange. Yet we won't permit other nations the same privilege. It was by the slenderest of margins that the measure continuing the policy of reducing tariff barriers scraped through Congress. Yet our old-time Yankee traders built fortunes by trading American goods for other goods in every port on the seven seas.

In our domestic trade we boast how much a dollar will buy in comparison to the number of hours any man had to labor fifty or a hundred years ago. It is a fact that life today can be far more comfortable. But it also is a fact that men today buy that comfort only by mortgaging their bodies for a variety of costly machines. The cost of living is rising by leaps and bounds. The number of families that earn more than \$2,000 a year, is still pitifully small. These machines, this comfort is beyond the means of the great majority of our people. That is the tragic import of the millions spent on gambling, and the hours wasted on "give away" programs.

In our government economy we are spending huge sums of the tax-payers' income in non-recreative ways. The largest portion of our national income is spent to pay for past or future wars. If a private family were to go down Main Street breaking windows, arms and legs, borrowing recklessly to pay for ensuing costs, Society would quickly put a stop to it. For that family would soon end up in moral and financial bankruptcy. But that is exactly what you and you and I are doing today, with no end in sight! There is no glory in armies or fighting. Only folly.

The American People's insane preoccupation with acquiring material wealth at the expense of personal character, health and real bodily comfort, represents a phenomenon of mob psychology and fear psychosis. It is a grim reliving of the ancient fable of the "Midas touch". Everything we manufacture or create may be converted into gold. But that stroke of business acumen cannot possibly feed us, clothe us, give us adequate shelter. If you search for a home today, you will be tragically impressed that except for the expensive gadgets, the actual living space, living conditions and opportunities for gracious, happy family life are growing less or deteriorating year by year—except possibly for a favored few. And the number of the latter is decreasing rapidly.

It is time for Americans everywhere to awake to the despoiling of their inheritance. Whether we like it or not, America has been cast to play a great role in history. Adolescence is now definitely behind us. It is up to us to act as adult men and women. The future happiness of the entire world as well as that of ourselves and our children, rests upon our choosing practical human values instead of property values in the days ahead. A golden theme and opportunity for writers:

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FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

CLARITY IS A BASIC VIRTUE

There is much to be said for clarity. That is, if what you write is to be read by many people. If you write for the few, you can of course write in a private language that may be understood only by your clique. But if you wish to be read and appreciated by a widely scattered volume of readers, it's only commonsense to be lucid.

But you needn't be obvious. You can always be subtle and yet be clear. Subtlety often accomplishes more than obviousness, because it does not offend the reader's sense of fitness.

However, there is a vast difference between subtlety and inaccuracy. How disturbing it is to have to get directions from some person, who constantly mixes up the names of streets. It is just as disturbing to have to read the work of a poet, who ignores grammar & punctuation; and who uses words incorrectly. For these elements are the guideposts by which a reader reaches the conclusion that the poet had in mind.

I recently analyzed a poem in which there appeared the word "man", used in its larger sense referring to all mankind. Of course, in that case "man" took in everyone. But the poet later befuddled his reader by speaking of "man" doing something, while "other people slept". He did not give the right directions, because naturally, when you're thinking of "man" in relation to humankind, there are no others.

And so, because of his incorrect use of a word, he brought up an image which was less than lucid. Consistency is necessary for lucid imagery. And good clear images are necessary for clarity. Take the following poem by Stanton Coblenz in "Garnered Sheaves," a new collection of his poems, recently issued by Wings Press.

THESE WOODS OF LIGHT & SHADOW

These woods of light and shadow
Are like a vaulted shrine,
Blest by the veneration
Of redwood and of pine.

For here the priestly fingers
Of mottled green and brown,
And here is rest and healing
When worldly fevers smart.

Here, on the branching wood-sisles
Of mottled green and brown,
A spell as of the ages
Settles serenely down.

Copyright, 1949. By Stanton Coblenz. Wings Press.

And here the wanderer shuffles
The load of self aside,
And beauty leaps to worship
And leaves him purified.

After introducing the image of the "vaulted shrine", Mr. Coblenz consistently sticks to it and builds it up. How much more effective the poem is this way than it would be, if Mr. Coblenz in the second stanza compared the "woods" to something else, and in the third stanza to still another thing forcing us to change mental pictures. Or if he had started with one image, had shifted to some other and then back again to the first.

Avoidance of inversion is an aid to clarity. Words in their natural order are easier to comprehend, much easier.

Another aid to clarity is the choice of a rhythm that fits the mood of the poem. For rhythm can help to put an idea over by conveying the feeling behind it. If you're writing about a gay subject, you choose, rather inevitably, a gay rhythm, and that choice is a help to you in putting across a gay mood, or emotion, which in turn clarifies the subject. Here is an example, also from "Garnered Sheaves" and the same author.

BLUEJAYS

Each like a deep-blue petal
Blown on a whisking breeze
Under the redwood steeples
And over the laurel trees!

Each like a deep-blue petal!
Hear how they shriek and shrill
In a bacchanalian revel
Of frolicking wing and bill!

Their small eyes gleam so brightly
As they riot across the woods,
Playing at chase-and-follow
In hilarious brotherhoods,

That I smilingly turn from stories
Of nature, red in claw,
To a world where flight and laughter
And a madcap joy are law.

Suppose Mr. Coblenz had used the slow, & measured tread of the funeral dirge for his rhythm. Do you think it would have been just as easy to get a clear idea of his "hilarious" bluejays?

If you are writing song lyrics, clarity is especially essential. The singing voice does not project as clearly the enunciated sound of the chosen words as does the voice, when used in ordinary speech. Therefore, it's necessary to abide by all the rules for clarity in the writing of the lyrics. Moreover, it is a good idea to have the dialogue immediately preceding the song (in the case of an operetta or musical play) bring out the essential meaning. Let the lyrics merely confirm and add to it.

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Achieving clarity is merely a matter of a sportsman-like policy of playing the game—according to the rules. The general rules & the particular rules you set up at the very beginning, that are understood by both your reader and you. As in the writing of fantasy, the reader will go along with a considerable way, if draw up the rules before, not after you make use of them. Be as subtle as you like, but don't be obscure or downright misleading.

MEMO: "NOT IN THE MARKET"

APPLIED GRAPHIC ARTS, Walter Fillen, 119 Ellison St., Paterson, N. J., wishes not to be considered in the market at present. Mr. Fillen in answer to a query replied, "We're swamped with stuff and pressed for time returning much that is strictly not for us... Our publications are syndicate type: The OPEN BOOK, distributed through the 'mortgage departments' of financial institutions." He added that they suspended in 1947, paper and printing conditions being what they were. In spite of these, they have now resumed since there is a demand for their product. They've always paid on publication.

WHAT ABOUT OUTLINES?

A writer asked us about Outlines recently. She had been asked by a publishing house to submit an outline in connection with a book on which she had received a green light. It was not clear to her, however, what kind of an outline she was expected to turn in. So, she asked us to advise her and to write the following article. (We try to give this kind of service to our friends and readers, using REWRITE as a workshop in which we can thresh out many of the specific individual problems that pass across the desks of Bill & Elva—a service that is unique and not given elsewhere by any of the writers' magazines.)

Outlines are of many types. They run all the way from a regulation "I. A. I. s." outline used by millions of college note-takers, to the elaborate emotionalized treatments—a sort of running summary of the story—used by motion picture writers in selling the handful of "originals" that are sold direct to the picture companies. In between, there are many variations, almost as many as there are individual writers. Naturally, outlines vary according to their use. An outline for a short article will be very different from one for an elaborate historical novel.

The first requirement nevertheless, is identical with a basic one in all writing. A writer helps himself immensely when he succeeds in visualizing his idea. That is what an outline is mainly for: to help you showcase your product, so the editorial reader, like any customer, will be able to make a decision as to whether he wishes to buy it or not. The more you can make it stand out on a page of white paper the way a diamond does, let's say, on a black velvet mat, the bet-

ter chance you have of making a sale. An editor has a lot of angles and problems which he must solve satisfactorily before he says "yes" to a ms. In the particular case which started us off, our friend was attempting to get in on a series that has been publishing new additions for some time. Therefore, the editor needs to know how the new books pressed by prospective contributors will fit into the overall picture in point of subject-matter, style, etc. The editor probably has routine way of "casing" new mss. by outline blueprints. But on the other hand an orderly, graphic summary that will show the editor how our friend proposes to handle material, would probably prove satisfactory this first time. On later occasions, should this initial contribution be accepted, the editor might suggest ways in which the outlines could be changed to meet the usual policy.

The main idea behind any scenario is naturally the commercially cynical one of making the editor sign a check. To my mind accordingly, the smart way to sell him a bill of goods is to appeal to both his mind, and his emotions. It does not matter much which you hit first, so long as you hit him—hard in both places. As I have implied in the above paragraph, it is a good thing to "know your editor" as well as you possibly can. If he likes a special kind of outline, be sure to work in that type of medium, if you possibly can. There are ways of getting to know his likes and dislikes. You can use a direct approach, or talk with his secretary, or his his assistant while he is on vacation. You talk with librarians, read about his books, his firm, etc. in the public library. Do a thorough detective job. That's one way.

Another is to concentrate on your job and try to make it speak so well for itself that he will be unable to refuse you. Personally, I have always favored that latter method. If you can eliminate every possible reason for rejection, you don't leave the editor a rejection space to turn around in. He has got to accept you. In this type of attack writers strive to indicate clearly and dramatically the step-by-step progress of the continuity, the flow of ideas and emotion. If you can do this with emotional pull, so much the better.

In this respect brevity is the soul of wit and it is well to remember that as the ministerial gag has it, "no souls are saved after the first twenty minutes". I know writers who writhe and torture themselves to a pulp trying to get their idea on to a single sheet of white paper. There is an anecdote, which is just now going the rounds, telling about how the late Will Rogers asked to see the script of what was to be his first talking picture. Homer Croy produced a small bit of paper. The full script read: "Tike Peters loses his money in the depression & adjusts himself to the situation". Will Rogers told him it was all right. He saw the situations waiting to be developed. That was enough.

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WE LEARN FROM OUR EXPERIENCES

We have been privileged to see the critical comment of the fiction editor of ARGOSY on a story he rejected. Jim O'Connell earlier had accepted a first story from the same author and had worked on it considerably. It is an illuminating comment because it shows up one of the commonest faults in the yarns of many inexperienced writers. Mere man-to-man conflict is not enough, even in a slambang pulp story. What the editors want is a struggle growing plausibly out of background & character.

Writing to the author's agent, Mr. O'Connell made the point that the author consistently failed to achieve "insight" as to his characters' motivations. (Reread in REWRITE for September, Sarah Orne Jewett's letter—in which she tells Willa Cather that despite the latter's skilled reportorial observation of her characters and their backgrounds, she needed in her early days more "insight" into the intellectual and emotional motivation behind her characters. It is a universal, an all-pervading weakness of the beginning and inexperienced writer. He is content to picture surface realism and let inner truth go by the board.

Speaking of this over-simplification, Jim O'Connell handed out a very real lesson. He said: "The villain in this piece can be dismissed without a second look. He is completely one-sided, completely black-hearted, and so, uninteresting as one side of an emotional conflict. The hero has almost as small a personality. The story itself suffers from a lack of invention." He wound up by commenting that this kind of story "needs very careful attention to keep it from being swept away by a flood of similar stories."

The author's first reaction to this criticism was that it was harsh and caustic, and even "abusive". I know, however, that he is too good a judge of writing himself not to be eventually aware that comparison of his two stories, one published, one rejected, is an opportunity to learn a tremendous amount about fiction writing. Elva and I both studied the two stories literally line by line. We discussed them for several days. Jim O'Connell without telling the author specifically how to repair his story, has put fingers right on its initial trouble. I'm sure that if the author goes back and studies in detail what was done to his first story, he will learn how to correct his weakness.

That is the first law of writing, indeed, of living. No matter how you get slapped, no matter if the editor seems to tramp & stamp with savage glee on your poor efforts, it's up to you to learn from the experience. Incidentally, this case-study gave me insight into the matter of agents. The one involved is a very popular big name agent. If I had been in his shoes, I never would have allowed this ms. to go out of my office. I don't

know what his reasons were for trying for a sale. Probably they were good reasons. Nevertheless, a letter as sharp as this one is an indictment of the agent, even more than of the writer. It just goes to show how important it is for the agent to protect clients from their own mistakes. In this case, next time the story will have to be awfully good to overcome the editor's built up prejudice because of the sour ms. he was permitted to read. It could also mean a smaller check. An editor stretches his budget when he knows a story is good and that the author can deliver A-1 goods consistently. He holds on to a limited supply of money when he has his attention called to the fact that he is dealing with an "in-and-outer".

WATCH THOSE "LOCALS"

Mrs. Tennie C. Toussaint sent us an amusing account she wrote for her local Vermont paper of a "doodle-bug hay-ride". It was an observant piece full of the color of a modern hay-ride, powered by Fordson tractors & lengthened out by trailers. A kind of "peeraide" that ended up at the schoolhouse—for a charcoal fire was keeping weenies, coffee and other New England delicacies "hotted up" for the hungry "bug riders".

We told Mrs. Toussaint that there were a number of other stories in that story. That is the kind of story any writer should file away and use again for background and color and humor. I can see at least one good fiction story, a hobby article and an editorial waiting to be written there. Incidentally, that is one heck of a good American way of attacking the so-called "juvenile delinquency" problem, isn't it? (Those in charge had provided the tin horns and had also secured permission at the Morrill place for a "raid" by the "younger set" on the orchard, for windfalls. So a nice time was had by all, as the saying is.)

In the same way we had the point underlined for us by a story about Slovak activities in Pennsylvania. Mrs. Julia Pesola sent the clipping in. Everything we have said in the above paragraph applies to foreign folklore also. There is where you find the seeds for the stories that have been "fattened up" by the author putting the "guts" of local color and character into them.

Don't be bound hand and foot by the "real life" facts and background. Use it as a beginning, then apply that feeling for invention that Jim O'Connell asks for. That way, you will go places with your writing. Honest injun!

"HE WHO TOUCHES PITCH BECOMES DEFILED!"

At Durham I was told the answer a writers magazine editor gave to a teacher, who protested at certain "racket" advs. the editor continued to accept. "We need that money to stay in business," the editor said. Hmph!

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HOW TO REWRITE IS A PROBLEM

Every writer has his special way of doing things. It is always good to know the different techniques, for by comparing notes we learn how to improve our own. Here's a comment on rewriting by Raymond Chandler, author of five novels in the field of realistic detective fiction.

"When I rewrite, I rewrite completely," he says. "I do not polish or edit. It is true you gain something by verbal polishing, but you lose something too. What you lose is gusto, and I try not to edit it out. If a scene doesn't work for me I don't consciously aim to figure out why. I just try to recapture the mood and write it over from scratch. I therefore must write awkward bits, but I do not seem to mind. What I want is—a kind of spontaneous emotional drive, although I occasionally have cheated on this deliberately to keep within the mental boundaries of a character."

I am frank to say that this is not my way of writing. And I think it is can be dangerous advice for inexperienced writers, for it tends to encourage them to write superficially on the surface. Their spontaneous emotional drive is not usually too well thought out. Whether Mr. Chandler is conscious of it or not, he does think out in his head or on paper what is wrong with his scenes. It is possible to waste a lot of paper when you're trying to capture mood. That is what the undisciplined writer always says is the quality that guides him. But if you aren't very certain of where you are going, you can get off the track and write very loosely.

My own plan is to think through the story in my mind carefully. I try to encourage it to germinate. Then I write with as much enthusiasm and "emotional drive" as I can. After I get something down on paper, I figure what is wrong with it, or how I can yank it up, as they say in vaudeville. To me, that's really the most creatively exciting part of writing. Then it begins to take form and to gather substance. The texture deepens steadily as I apply my intellect to achieve emotional effect. Then it is that my powers of invention and imagination are called upon.

Mr. Chandler does not agree with me. But I believe that we are nearer to agreement in principle than he perhaps appreciates. Good writers apply a tremendous amount of intellectual reasoning to the lightest and seemingly most effortless pieces of humor. How or when they do this does not matter so much as that they do it sometime during the creative process. Too many young or inexperienced writers go on too long believing that it is the first spontaneous ranture that gives a story birth. And that once they have sung it into their typewriters, nothing must ever be touched. Mr. Chandler will undoubtedly agree with me that that is utter nonsense. Every story is hard work. REWRITE it as of-

ten as is necessary. But learn how you work best in rewriting. There is no sense in rewriting merely to give yourself the feeling that you are a professional thereby. It's a means, not an end. Learn to rewrite efficiently and not do any more than is necessary to accomplish the result you wish to gain.

USUALLY THE ANSWER IS: "KEEP WRITING!"

One of the best things Bill and Elvado is simply to keep many of our friends in there punching, fighting for time and the "knock-out" punch. A woman called me up recently to say she was "all discouraged". No sales, she is unfamiliar with the markets, has no money to spend on her writing, etc. She seemed about ready to quit, although she knows she's got some good stuff to sell. But a very long period of no results had weakened her fight incentives. This is a very common occupational hazard with writers. And it is at such a time that any writer must fight the hardest to keep his chips down on the board.

There are several reasons why rejections, those horrid but inescapable nemeses of you writers, are likely to keep bobbing up. The ms. may hit the right market at the "psychologically" wrong time. The editor may enjoy the piece, but be unable to buy it for several reasons. Hardest of these to bear naturally, is that he already has a similar ms. "in the house". But his inventory may be too high, or it may not fit into the pattern of other pieces scheduled over a period of several months.

Right now, no writer should be discouraged by rejections. Every editor and agent is aware that the summer of 1949 was terrible. Advertising was down, money was hard to get even in banks and readers were choosing the magazines they wanted to read very carefully. Newsstand sales were way down. As we go to press, it is still too early to predict, with any accuracy, whether the "up turn" in business will improve conditions. Ordinarily, publishers expect a normal lag in business turns affecting them. This is naturally, because the general public is not generally aware of the turns until they are well publicized in the press. It's no disgrace to be rejected when almost everyone else is.

With beginning and inexperienced writers, of course, there is always the possibility, that their writing needs to be improved. An editor can tell instinctively whether a ms. is "good" or not in the matter of sheer putting words together neatly. The first ms. I read this year at the Conference hit me between the eyes with the first paragraph. In a flash I was reading with mounting excitement to see whether it stood up all the way or not. By the end of the second page I was certain I had made a "discovery". When I'd finished, I knew the author needed much more practice, that she lacked plot sense, needed more experience in writing commercially, for publication. But she could write!

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A fourth factor is that of the knowledge, that a writer has, or can command, of markets he may be reasonably expected to hit. Most writers know too little about markets. They fire blindly at the top magazines, and when their mss. come home, they do not know what to do with them. They either make a weak attempt to send them out again, or they stuff them in a drawer and let them mildew. A ms. does no one any good lying idle in a drawer where no editor can see it.

Many writers dream that if only they were able to interest an agent, their stuff would sell, and away they would go in a breeze. Of course nothing could be further from a true estimate of the situation. An agent handles only salable merchandise. No ms. that writers just write with no particular idea of a market, is usually salable. Besides, there's a vicious circle. An agent won't handle the writer who is not already selling, and your average beginning writer won't try to sell, because he does not think there is a chance until he gets an agent. Therefore, there is a nice little gulf, void or vacuum.

As we have said many times, there isn't a substitute for the writer buckling down and (1) writing purposefully; (2) selling mss., until he can strike fire and persuade someone else to do it for him. And even then he must supply the ideas. And ideas only come, if the writer is thinking realistically, in terms of editors with holes to fill. When I was a boy I recall watching a Harvard football game in which during a certain desperate drive or defense the Harvard field captain of the moment kicked—each of his line men on their buttocks resoundingly. "Get in there, you so-and-so!" he shouted under the tidal wave of stadium yelling. They did. In the course of the years I sometimes reflect sadly upon the picture of that unknown crimson-jerseyed figure appearing so frequently in my mind's eye. I say to myself, "Am I really a trained technician, or is my fate simply that of a hard pressed quarterback, who must continually kick his team-mates to victory? We certainly have to use many threats, cajolings, wiles and pleadings to spur writers on to the point of just continuing to swim, when we know they are almost in sight of the Cliffs of Dover.

A GOOD CRITIC IS NEVER PREJUDICED

A woman sent us a story to read the other day with the comment that she thought probably it was the kind of story I wouldn't appreciate ("like" was the word she used). In this business, however, you cannot afford a persnickety palate. A critic who is good at all, must be as objective as a wine-taster. He must be able to discard personal likes & dislikes, and in their place substitute the absolutes of judgment based on values which are more substantial than mere individual or casual whims. Elva and I have our personal, sometimes changing preferences in stories & subject-matter. But the last thing we do in making up our minds is to ask ourselves: is

it good "in kind"? If it is a good Western, or an enjoyable Romance, that's all that is important to us. You will have gone a long, long way in your career of being a writer—if when you condemn a certain type of story you can add after reading a particular story, well "for me it stinks, but I will have to admit it is good stink."

HURRY, HURRY, HURRY! BITE QUICK!

One of the song publishing companies that Syde Berman of the SONGWRITER'S REVIEW does not approve of, has so far advanced the high pressure techniques of selling its services to writers, that it encloses a return envelop on which you do not have to pay postage, when you rush your latest song to this publisher. The same firm also makes a practice of telling you some of the reprehensible, evil things that rival publishing shops do!

NEW THEMES, NEW PLOTS

A news-sheet from Alfred A. Knopf recently pointed up the new situations that World War II set up for authors to write about. A new novel by Constantine FitzGibbon has for its theme the fact that the "occupation of a conquered nation, even if benevolent, eventually corrupts the conquered, and degrades the conqueror." And Paul Gallico in another novel tells the story of the young war-time flyers, who discover their own emotional insecurity and lack of preparedness to make a decision involving mature adult relations.

It is because REWRITE is aware that we're living in a fast-moving world where new situations and new relationships are constantly developing, that we try to help writers and authors to think about and to think through the conditions under which they live. Many experienced and resourceful story-tellers, I know, are giving serious thought to changes going around them, and their own fitness to meet them. The old conventional stories and trite themes simply are not good enough. To be a writer today takes courage and imagination. Whenever I talk with the young men or women, who went overseas, I am struck by an overwhelming absorption in the meaning, and motivations of life. Many of these young veterans are confused and depressed. But of one thing I am certain, that eventually the emotions and ideas that are being churned up in them, are going to come out in the form and substance of some real writing. And that is going to offer real competition to those of us who stayed behind. We must adapt, or—be swept away in the onrushing flood.

THE SAME STORY UNDER THE SURFACE

Raymond Chandler had a piece published in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY not long ago regarding the "formal or classic detective story". In a very roccoco style he states that although there have been changes in the background and personalities of the characters, the story's basically the same. Swifter tempo, more glib.

REWRITE

WHAT'S YOUR STORY ALL ABOUT?

I read a piece the other day in which the author, a practicing advertising man, stated that "The chances of selling any book are infinitely greater, if its subject is emphasized and made perfectly clear. Many a first novel could be rescued from oblivion by more emphasis on its story and less upon the great promise and the astounding talent of the new and unknown author."

How many times when we sit down and write a story are we perfectly clear in our minds what it is about? But how many times is the reader equally clear? The perfect story has no need of those innocent little blurbs the editor puts at the head of the page, to put the reader comfortably au courant with situation and theme. Mr. Denhard says that the facts are it is news and drama when Mackinlay Kantor writes a novel about a nice young couple that is forced by economic conditions to commit an abortion. It is also news when Betty Smith does not write about Brooklyn.

But how often do we sell the reader warmly and emotionally with vigorous, well visualized dramatic scenes on what our story is about? Do you get it in the first line, the first paragraph, in smashing, striking, and punchy phrases that your story is about the woman on the next street, who is better than most of her neighbors—even though she's not married according to the law? It sounds like melodrama, doesn't it? But you can find variations on the theme in the Bible. A melodramatic story is only one in which the author has not bothered to work in the characterization. The real point of the argument, I think, you will agree, is whether readers know what the single, vibrating issue is in the first moment of the story, or the final page.

Readers wish to live vicariously. To grab themselves a piece of emotional experience. Therefore, the author who can say right off that "This is a story about"—and makes it so darned interesting that the reader can't do anything but sit down and read it, has a big bulge over the writer who does a learned essay before he begins. There is never a real excuse for not beginning with a simple issue. If you have a complex situation that needs a lot of explanation, the chances are you have a lemon of a story on your hands.

If you will practice grabbing yourself an arresting situation before you begin to get it down on paper, you will find that you're writing better and not wasting half so much time. Your characterization will improve because when you get yourself a good situation you will think it through better. And this in turn will help you to clarify it & build up the essential values. As you go along the street, think up situations that can be summarized in a nutshell. I have mentioned the game a couple of cub reporters used to play in the old days. We used to think in "head-

lines". We would vie to see who could tell a good story in a few words. "Big Sister Runs Away With Hubby", "Sub Down; Diver Wanted". (And that one is clipped from the September ARGOSY, just to prove the game is practical and timely as the dickens.)

NEWS AND COMMENT

The Juvenile Book Committee of the Authors Guild not long ago sent out a questionnaire to be filled in by members. The confidential data concerning authors' contracts, etc., when assembled and studied will do much toward clarifying general practices among the publishers. This will help the Committee to formulate policies for the protection of all writers. REWRITE periodically urges writers to join the Authors' League, and when their names have been assigned to guilds, actively to cooperate with such projects.

The September issue of the John D. Starnard News Service "Bulletin for Business Writers", edited by a member of the WCS Family, had a very good report on GRIT PUBLISHING CO., J. M. Sheen, Williamsport 3, Penna. This small town newspaper-magazine has a large circulation and uses personality pieces 250 to 750 words, always with one or two pictures, for which the rate is 2c. on Acc. and \$3.00 each for the pix. The Bulletin urges writers, incidentally, to subscribe at \$2.50, so as to "study the book" properly. That is a wise investment always, when you hope or expect to contribute regularly. Some editors put contributors on the mailing list.

In this connection, if you make any fairly considerable income from your writing, it is a good idea to attach to your income tax blank an itemized statement of the sources. Against this balances the legitimate expense of railroad fares, magazines, typewriter upkeep, telephone calls, etc. If you're a free lance writer, but earn a taxable income from a business or profession and do your writing on the side, it is important for you to let your Uncle Samuel know that your writing is not just essay "gravy". A reasonable and business-like statement that gives the facts, is generally accepted by the Internal Revenue Department.

Helen Langworthy, a good WCS Minute Man—helping her fellow members to save postage—reports:

AMERICAN CHILDHOOD, Springfield, Mass.... is badly overstocked.
The HOMEMAKER, 1706 Broadway, NYC 19, isn't accepting material.
TOWNSEND NATIONAL WEEKLY, out of the market.
OPPORTUNITIES ON PARADE is a book, not magazine, as some writers' magazines would lead you to believe.

The Bulletin for Business Writers in commendable fashion, warns writers against the mail-order "courses" and also against inaccurate market tips in writers' magazines.

REWRITE

WE STUDIED OPENINGS AT DURHAM

In the short story group at the UNH Writers' Conference this year we tried a device that worked quite well. With a panel of experts consisting of Herschel Brickell, Margarita Smith, fiction editor of MADEMOISELLE, William B. Harris, and Marjorie Fischer, the author of several books and stories, we offered the openings of a large number of stories sent in by Conference contributors and published authors. At first, the panel gave opinions on the worth of the opening one or two paragraphs. But soon the members warmed up and began pitching in with discussion. It amused me to see how unanimously most everyone agreed that a story was either one that we'd all like to continue, or drop. Few of the mss. were just lukewarm affairs. (In the case of the unpublished mss., the authors—all being present, were asked to signify an objection in advance, if they did not desire to be read in public. No author "passed".)

Herschel Brickell read a number of the openings from the Pocket Books edition of the O. Henry Memorial Prize Stories collection. Again, it was interesting to see how all of the authors started off with something that was arresting, exciting or emotionally moving. Particularly in these quality stories, we noticed that action per se was not often the all important common denominator, but a striking character, situation or problem in human relations was always present. In one way or another the authors made you readers sit up and take notice just as quickly as a commercial slick or even pulp writer would. Frequently this was done with the very first sentence, sometimes even the opening word or phrase.

THE BULLETIN BOARD

The WESTERN REVIEW, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, is the new address of one of the oldest and best known quality magazines in the Middle West. It is a pleasure for us to report that WR is "enlarging" as well as moving its editorial office. The Summer issue of this quarterly is being omitted, but the new program will commence with the Fall issue, and subs will be extended.

The FTC has issued a complaint against American Council on Public Affairs (also Public Affairs Press), charging misrepresentation that books and pamphlets originally issued by government agencies, but republished by the respondents with other titles affixed, are new works. The FTC also believes the firms corporate name to be misleading.

The National League of American Pen Women, Mrs. Lois Billinger, Chairman of the National Short Story Contest, has asked Bill & Elva to serve as judges in the forthcoming award of prizes in this special field. They are to be the sole judges for the short story. We are greatly honored, especially since if memory serves correctly, this is a repeat appointment for us.

A NEW MARKET FOR OFF-TRAIL STORIES

WRITERS' FUND, INC., Box 1497, Grand Central Station, NYC 17, is in the market "for good, competent realistic stories, any length up to 10,000 words, which do not suit the usual requirements of the commercial books.. Payment: 1c. per word on Acc., with a bonus of \$200 for the best story each year. With luck the rates will be increased eventually it is expected.

"This is a solid venture. People with money in back of it. I helped organize WF, and I hold the job of comptroller. A board, of fifteen readers, will pass on mss., and mss. to be accepted will be determined by a two-thirds vote.

"We will give first consideration to American contributors, but the work of other English language writers will also be welcome. Stories not involving professional writers, will stand a good chance if they are of exceptional quality and intended for informed adult readers. We plan pocket-size editions containing two to five stories, depending on length. Frankly, WF is an experiment. Fortunately, however, we have at least two years in which to test it."

J. L. Albee.

Note: Mr. Albee has been a subscriber for REWRITE for 5 years. We pass his summary of plans along as he gave it to us in two letters, one of which was in reply to ours, in which we asked for more details. We sincerely hope the venture will prove profitable to the sponsors and writers.

IT IS PUBLISHED IN FOUR LANGUAGES

ANNALS, Pan American Union, Washington 6, D.C., is a new publication designed to keep us informed about the American states.

NO "BACK-SLAPPERS" AT WCS

We were asked recently to read before publication a new book about writing. The purpose, of course, was to give us a chance to comment favorably. Our remarks would, then, have been placed prominently on the jacket. It would have meant a great deal of publicity for WCS and its allied activities. But since we review books for and represent the buyers of books through our WRITERS' BOOK CLUB we did not feel that it would be intellectually honest for us to do this job. Moreover, we pointed out—that we have had a fixed policy of (1) not accepting any advertising for REWRITE, nor (2) endorsing anything or service. This has been in effect continually since we established REWRITE. So, even for our best friends and for products, services, etc., that we respect highly, we refuse to write "endorsements". That is why a word of praise or recommendation by REWRITE rates so high in the writing and publishing worlds. (And why if you see excerpts quoted without authority, you should "look sharp".

REWRITE

A HINT FOR SHARPER PLOTTING

Here is a principle I discussed at the UNH Conference which will help you to make your fiction scenes sharper. It defines in a few words the steps a character goes through in reacting and responding to the stimulation, which is set up in a dramatic struggle by a conflict character. Naturally, this amounts to merely the skin and bones, or to express it more accurately, the bone structure from which a scene is gradually built up. A writer must give the emotional and intellectual relationship between the two characters, the content springing out of genuine characterization. But this idea will start you off.

First, however, let me remind you that an effective scene is constructed by developing a logical and systematic struggle between a pair of worthy opponents. Let us say the MC meets the villain in a preliminary conflict scene. The MC is planning to buy a tenement and tear it down so the kids can have space to play ball. But the ward boss maintains a political clubroom on the premises. He has invaded the MC's office now to tell him, "You can't do this to me." The MC replies, "I am going to fulfill my promise." A simple: "You can't!..." "I will!" dramatic clash.

Yes, but you have got to (1) show the MC; (2) the villain; (3) bring them together in a plausible meeting place; (4) state the issue at stake; (5) develop the conflict; (6) bring it to a climax in which one of the two characters commits a decisive act; (7) show the immediate result, and (8) build up that all important carry-over of interest, which will sweep the reader forward to the consequences in the next or some succeeding meeting. Did anyone say that they can toss off a dramatic scene before breakfast? And do you think of the centipede, who tripped over his own feet, when he stopped to think how ever he walked?

Well, now, here is that device I spoke of above. The villain says, "You can't!" Grimly the MC replies, "I will!" There are 3 individual steps here. And it is only by making the most of each of them that you raise the reader's blood pressure. First, the villain stimulates the MC. But this is not entirely as simple as it sounds. He starts by frightening the MC. Self-confident himself, toys with the MC before delivering the blow to the heart. He torments, ridicules, makes a threat or two, builds up to the "You can't do this!"

The second step is for the MC to be stimulated, receive the bad news. He reacts. He may be disbelieving, shocked, knocked to his knees for the moment; or he may take it "on the arm", smile, dissimulate while he gathers his forces together. The needle goes in and he has to adjust, size up the effect of it on himself and the situation in general.

The third step occurs when he finishes re-

acting and responds in some positive, practical way. The mosquito has stung him, he reacts and—bang, down comes the slap. In the ordinary dramatic scene there are three possibilities for the MC, or the positive character (the latter may not always be the MC, in a scene where the villain temporarily achieves victory, for example). He may admit defeat, he may beat off the attack, sparring for time, or he may himself triumph after a struggle.

In any case, if you think in terms of the struggle between characters rather than the turgid churning of one character's mind, it will be easy for you to use this simple bit of psychology to good effect. Every time in every step of a scene that the two characters rub against each other, think in terms, not only of one character stimulating his opposite, but of both doing it, you will have a very interesting and complex system of human relations to develop and to work out.

For bear in mind that I have depicted only one step in a progressive chain. If the MC reacts and then responds to the stimulation of the villain, this response is, naturally the return stimulation of the MC toward the villain. The latter in return must inevitably react and respond, thus stimulating a second time the MC. And once you commence a series of reactions of this kind, it is impossible for them not to continue in a kind of chain reaction. The drive is as certain as the reciprocal drive of a pair of locomotive wheels propelled by matched steam-cylinders and driving rods. In, out, in and out, in and out go the pistons, except that in this case it is in the form of dialogue, ideas and emotions filling the cylinders, & exploded by the spark of contact that flies back and forth between the two characters.

If you get the hang of it, this is one of the fascinations of fiction for the writer. He sets up a system of chain reaction, then tinkers with it, so that there is never one dull moment. On the contrary, there is a continuity, a flow of steam, or gas, to use another and perhaps more volatile image, sparked by the exploding element of human emotion on each side. The pace may alter, slow up a moment or two, then build as the tension increases. But even this is controlled partly by the author, who keeps his eye ever on the reader to see if the scene is proving effective, is dull or simply too exciting for an emotionally stirred reader to absorb.

This is one more piece of technique which a writer has got to learn to handle by slow motion practice, then "forget" by making it an instinctive part of his own senses & reaction to his materials. Obviously, if anyone tries consciously to build a system of psychological action and reaction as complicated as this while he is creating, he will stumble like the centipede. You have simply got to practice it at odd moments until it is a part of you. Then it will be automatic.

REWRITE

"ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE!"

It has been forced upon our attention in a number of stories how easily writers lose a reader's interest by over-emphasizing negative values instead of the affirmative. One story I read yesterday was about a snob. We could not get very much interested in an MC who felt so sorry for herself. But if there had been more emphasis on the outside trick of fate that had uprooted this woman rather than her self-pitying inner reaction to it, readers would have been cheering for her, & curious to see how she would respond to her fate. The author incidentally, had made the problem even harder for herself by characterizing the MC's husband as a bit of a heel. If the change of circumstances had been unavoidable so far as he was concerned, and if he had made a gallant attempt to fight back against ill-fortune, we would be predisposed to root for the MC.

In another story we read recently a writer pitched a young David, figuratively speaking, against a bruising Goliath. Struggle, a dramatic encounter, yes. But unfortunately,

SOMERSET MAUGHAM ON NOTEBOOKS

I forget who it was who said that every author should keep a notebook, but should take care never to refer to it. If you understand this properly, I think there is truth in it. By making a note of something that strikes you, you separate it from the incessant stream of impressions that crowd across the mental eye, and perhaps fix it in your memory. All of us have had good ideas or vivid sensations that we thought would one day come in useful, but which, because we were too lazy to write them down, have entirely escaped us. When you know you are going to make a note of something, you look at it more attentively than you otherwise would, and in the process of doing so the words which will give it its private place in reality are borne in upon you. The danger of using notes is that you find yourself inclined to rely on them, and so lose the even and natural flow of your writing which comes from allowing the unconscious that full activity which is somewhat pompously known as inspiration. You are also inclined to drag in your jottings whether they fit in or not. Yet, for my part, I think to keep copious notes is an excellent practice, and I can only regret that a natural indolence has prevented me from exercising it more diligently. They cannot fail to be of service, if they are used with intelligence and discretion.

Reprinted with acknowledgment to COSMOPOLITAN MAGAZINE.

These notes do not pretend to be a journal; I never wrote anything about my meetings with interesting or famous people. I am sorry that I didn't. It would doubtless have made the following pages more amusing if I had recorded my conversations with the many and distinguished writers, painters, actors, and politicians I have known more or less intimately. It never occurred to me to do so. I never made a note of anything that I did not think would be useful to me at one time or another in my work, and though, especially in the early notebooks, I jotted down all kinds of thoughts and emotions of a personal nature, it was only with the intention of ascribing them sooner or later to the creatures of my invention. I meant my notebooks to be a storehouse of materials for future use, and nothing else.

As I grew older and more aware of my intentions, I used my notebooks less to record my private opinions, and more to put down while still fresh my impressions of such persons and places as seemed likely to be of service to me for the particular purpose I had in view at the moment.

"A Writer's Notebook" by W. Somerset Maugham, \$4.00. Coming October 20, 1949...

A very unusual and interesting book for writers to read and study. Make your reservation now.

the author forgot his characterization. The battle deteriorated into just a brawl. Readers could find no interest in watching this commonplace hero stack up against a jealous "mug". It was simply sordid, where it ought to have been heroic.

There is no substitute for characterizing values in the men and women with whom you've peopled your stories. And characterization, of course, is never concerned solely with a list of what they wear and how they look. A person's character in action is more interesting to the reader than the external description of him. It is his emotions and his morals that really count. Stop and think about the gossip your neighbor whispers over the backyard fence. Isn't it the things the other neighbors do and the kind of good and evil people they seem to be, that makes the grapevine hum?

But mere sordid details—realistic stuff, as too many writers are apt to think today, is not enough. People are funny, perhaps, but it is a fact that they seem to like stories favoring a constructive side. Observe if you will, the perennial popularity of the writers who tell their stories about "gallant", courageous characters and generally take advantage of themes which give people hope and inspiration. It has been reiterated frequently that all fiction deals more or less with moral values—bang-bang pulps, slick and quality. The only difference is in the mental approach, which increases the nearer you get to the quality top. The pulps stress the emotional conflict rather than the intellectual. Even in a pulp, however, the more that a villain is well characterized & motivated by credible impulses rather than mere insane jealousies or lust and a spirit of revenge, the better readers will like him.

Finally, it is the interplay of a group of well documented characters that makes for an exciting story. Again this represents an emphasis on the positive. Anyone can develop the type of drama that depends upon the villain being just cussed and mean. It takes imagination and skill, however, to plot a real story based on a keen sense of human interest, and logical character values. But watch what it does to your next story, if you "accentuate the positive". Don't try to make your villains "dramatic" and "heavy". Keep your story plausible and light. Humor is one of the best ways to emphasize the constructive.

HOW DO YOU TAKE NOTES?

There is a lot to think about regarding note-taking in Somerset Maugham's short essay. Think it over.

REWRITE

A FEW WORDS FOR ARTICLE WRITERS

Article writers would do well to think of their job as similar to a guided tour. Have you been on one of these some time and noted the way a really good guide combines his knowledge of facts with a real enthusiasm & also an interest in the background of those persons whom he is guiding? This requires a good deal of organizational ability and also quick thinking. The guide must be on the alert to find out or to notice what are the special features holding value for his listeners. He must work extemporaneously. But a writer on the other hand, while he should be able to make his article appear topically spontaneous, has the advantage of planning far in advance.

Whether the article writer follows up the present tendency to fictionalize much of what he writes or not, he should be able to visualize clearly. Too many of the articles we read here are dull because they contain too many facts and not enough dramatic use of the facts. This implies an understanding of the meaning of the facts. That is a kind of mental visualization, which is something else. What I am speaking about now is the quality of making the reader feel that he is there, on the scene, seeing the whole situation in his mind's eye if not with his own eyes.

One way to accomplish this is to set your scene simply and graphically step by step. A reader is greatly helped if you tell him in a word picture what he is supposed to see—the way the radio writer tells you that the heroine is going to drop a glass before she actually does it. Start your reader at a particular spot and then draw him steadily toward a definite goal. Don't jerk him, on the contrary, lead him easily, casually from one point to another. Constantly plant the next step by an indirect reference to it.

SOME TIPS, NEWS, AND PREDICTIONS

ARGOSY, 205 East 42nd St., NYC 17, uses a "Tell Tale" each month, for which it pays a flat sum of \$5.

EQMM \$6,000 Detective Short Story Contest, 570 Lexington Ave., NYC 22, closes Oct. 22. So this is the last call for stories, which must be under 10,000 words. Some 11 prizes and the Ellery Queen Magazine has been buying additional mss. for several years.

In the August issue of AMERICAN MERCURY a piece by Stanton A. Coblenz, editor of the poetry magazine, WINGS. A critical estimate of the place and importance of poetry magazines in American publishing today, it ought to be required reading for every poet before he or she is permitted to send out any mss. in the mail. In a humorous way it summarizes some of the means by which poets impose on, and drive crazy their editors; and also the methods by which the poets themselves suffer the humiliation of being hooked by their

own vanity. Probably those who need it most won't take the trouble to look it up.

WRITERS' REJECTS, 268 Bleeker St., NYC 14, has been forced to suspend. Reason: excessive production costs. Just one more example to prove that we are living in an age of economic absurdity. Our values are completely nonsensical. (WR'S Ms. Clinic continues.)

Writers' Talent Scout, which was first announced nearly two years ago, with a "deadline" of May 31, 1948, for the first of its two-a-year contests with big prizes has finally distributed a list of the prize winners for its first contest. At the same time it adds that "For reasons beyond our control we have found it necessary to discontinue further publishing." (Both REWRITE and National Writers' Club reported unfavorably this one and Arthur Gordon, then editor of COSMOPOLITAN, and much perturbed over being involved in it, personally talked with us regarding it by long distance telephone from NYC.)

Shortly after returning from the UNH Conference we at WCS experienced our now usual and annual flooded basement, thanks to Cambridge's antique sewer system. A cloudburst about 2 A.M. on the morning of September 1, resulted in 42 inches of filthy water backing up. Loss: about 1,000 envelopes. We will be recalling this, come Election Day!

Harry Edward Neal, prolific writer & teacher in addition to holding down an important full time government executive position, is the author of "Writing and Selling Fact and Fiction" soon to be published by Wilfred Funk. This is the final title of the book WRITERS' NEWSLETTER referred to as "Practical Writing", the preliminary working title. Harry is one of our WCS Family and we are proud of him.

A trend in book publishing? What seems to be a new trend is the "pre-publication" offer, whereby you can buy a book at a saving if you buy it from your bookseller—with a firm order before it is published. This has a number of angles to it:

- (1) The ultimate consumer has to buy a book "sight unseen", which is not a good idea.
- (2) The bookseller gets sales-helps from the publisher; he also can build up a large advance order on which he gets a better profit because of the higher discount and reduced transportation charges.
- (3) The publisher can gauge his first print order closer to what he knows he can sell. A publisher is also likely to gamble a higher "run" when he has definite orders totalling so many thousands of copies. On books which are generally printed only once, this makes for a better chance to stay in print longer.
- (4) For authors, especially new authors or the authors of limited sale books, this plan of exploitation offers more certainty & hope.

REWRITE

HOW TO KEEP FRIENDS AND...

Louise M. Frankenstein, one of the smartest publicity women in the book business, saw our August piece about a number of publishing firms being swallowed up by the Outlet-Crown people. In no time, Mrs. F. wrote to explain it all. It seems the Outlet Book Co., parent organization, is the remainder firm. Crown publishes the "adult general books and fiction, and Iothrop, Lee & Shepard, a hundred year old firm, the juveniles." Both are subsidiaries of Outlet.

"You will be glad to know, I am sure," she adds, "that whenever Outlet buys stock, and contracts of a publishing company, we write to all the authors for whom we have contracts in the file, to let them know of the change and to make a legal agreement with them."

All this is good to know. But I nevertheless consider it vitally important that every author should always have a "reversion" clause, which automatically makes him free, if the ownership of his publishing firm alters. And from the point of view of a writer, it is rather frightening to know that decisions concerning one's masterpieces ultimately reside in a remainder house. No matter how considerate and self-effacing it may be, the image of an impatient creditor's hot breath coursing down the back of one's neck will persist. "It could happen to me" stuff.

END OF AN EXPERIMENT

Farrar, Straus & Co., John Meyer, 53 East 34th St., NYC 16, have been sending cards to writers, who submitted mss. for the Regional Fellowships, stating that the awards were discontinued on August 1st. The firm offers to read the finished mss. with a view to the publication of acceptable mss. on a regular royalty publication basis.

A BULLETIN FOR BUSINESS WRITERS

Crowded out of the September issue in the rush of getting off to Durham, was a notice about the "Bulletin for Business Writers"—it's similar to REWRITE and published by the John D. Stenard News Service, Drawer 1556, Chattanooga 1, Tenn. John is a business writer himself, and also a subscriber to REWRITE. The Bulletin has been a private letter service, but in September John reduced his subscription fee and is opening the magazine's circulation to wider audiences. It will go on newsstand sale, we understand. The business writer will find it helpful; its market information is gathered by Stenard on his own trips to editors' offices. Like REWRITE, it accepts no advertising.

REWRITE and The SONGWRITER'S REVIEW in an article in the National Writers' Club bulletin were singled out as the "only" writers' magazines that "check up on misleading advertising and unfair practices" and are "militantly opposed to racketeers and incompetent

song services." REWRITE does not pretend to be an authority on songwriting. We turn over to Syde Berman of The SONGWRITERS' REVIEW all matters in this field that were unable to answer authoritatively. But we are proud to receive such approval of our work in behalf of writers, and we shall continue to offer a close cooperation with all organizations of writers that have the best interests of the writer at heart.

The article, entitled "Truth in Advertising", listed a number of practices that NWC disapproves of. We were especially pleased, naturally, to see the mention of ghostwriters, who may improve worthless mss., but in the final analysis leave them still "worthless" so far as any commercial sale is concerned. Collecting a fee for this kind of incompetent service seems to us the most cruel and heartless type of knavery. There are several firms that do it regularly. Because of libel laws, we cannot name them in public.

The NWC offers good advice: inquire before paying out any money; report your experience to NWC or REWRITE. We frequently pass these reports on to the other service so as to increase writers' protection.

MARKET FOR "HOW TO DO" BOOKS

Noroton Publishing Co., Herbert Moral, Boston Post Road, Noroton, Conn., is considering expansion of its mail-order book lines. The firm is well known for its promotion of the "Have-More" Plan with its reference library of supporting books. Herbert Moral was at the UNH Writers' Conference for his second straight year. He told me he would like to see "any good 'how to do' books". Naturally, these would be books having an appeal for a wide readership, books that would have a profitable sale for a number of years. The advertising and promotion would be of course on a large scale. Herb has had one book published by the Macmillan Co. ("Buying Country Property".)

A PAIR OF MARKET TIPS

HOUSEHOLD, 912 Kansas Ave., Topeka, Kan., has been sending out a rejection slip which reads, "Because of our increasing emphasis on factual articles, we are not now buying either fiction or verse." (Agents have usually rated this publication as one of the larger and better secondary markets for fiction.)

Pen (Public Employees News), Jan Greenlaw, Box 2451, Denver, Colorado, has been friendly and prompt in reporting to a number of the writers we have talked with recently. Good sized checks, too. Because of its specially slanted interest, it should be studied.

One of the best ways to build lists of the markets that are useful to you is to have a market handbook, then annotate it with tips from the late writers' magazines. Buy a new one every two or three years. It pays off.

REWRITE

ONE WAY FOR IDLE HANDS TO BE AT WORK!

Here is a practical suggestion for any of you who may be required to take an enforced vacation away from your typewriters. "I decided," Mayteel Fedash told us recently, "I would try my hand at creating some puzzles, Biblical ones, for our Catholic magazines.. (Part of that check I mentioned was in payment for the first ones I did. I have several more and think they will go over well.

"I believe this would be a good side-line for other shut-ins, who have to spend a part of their time in bed and therefore, are unable to devote as much time to their writing as they would like to. Any puzzle magazine, I would think, ought to supply plenty of ideas."

This is just another way that writers can earn small sums from their writing and gain additional experience while they are breaking in, waiting for the big checks to arrive. We at WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE are firm believers in making writing pay you a living, and, more important, finance, if possible, a thorough study of ways and means during any period of apprenticeship.

THIS EDITORIAL MAKES SENSE

In the August issue of the CPSA BULLETIN, (Catholic Poetry Society of America), there was an excellently thoughtful editorial regarding the fallacy that many writers innocently accept without question. To write a religious poem is not necessarily to achieve automatically either poetry or a spirit for religion. The editorial quotes Thomas Merton in his "Seeds of Contemplation," as reminding writers that to be a good apostle it's first necessary to be a good poet, not the reverse. "There is a tendency," adds the editorial a bit wryly, "to call our propaganda poetry—and any other propagandistic verse merely—propaganda...When we say it, it's religious poetry; when they say it, it's blatant propaganda."

We are not Catholics here at REWRITE, but we cannot help believing that if all religious and other apostles could look at themselves with as much humorous candor and objective wisdom, the cause of Christ and good poetry would be better served. Mature tolerance is an effective guide, philosopher and friend to men in any field, but most of all in that of the creative arts.

In the same issue of the BULLETIN we noted a comment by the editors of SPIRIT, that next to the number of poems "which proclaim that spring will succeed winter," come those which have been "over-written—that is, the poet does not really know when to stop." A good factor on which to check yourself just before you slip your latest batch into that large flat envelop. Incidentally, do you—always do that—stop and think, "Have I committed any sad blunders?" before sealing?

THE 1948 UNH CONFERENCE

The UNH Conference this year, the twelfth annual session that Bill has attended, proved to be one of the most interesting & stimulating ever, although it reflected a serious and sobering atmosphere of pessimism among both publishers and agents. Apart from the regular staff members, there were no publishers or agents who visited the session. A smaller number of writers returned this year also. It was a case of new faces right down the line.

But a number of these writers were established authors, not too proud to learn more about writing at an age when most big names are beginning to think about retiring. Dean of these undoubtedly was Mrs. Mary P. Hamlin whose play, "Alexander Hamilton," was produced by George Arliss and later filmed. Other experienced writers included: Mrs. Eleanor Jewett, author of 4 published juvenile books with two more to come this fall; Miss Pauline Geffens, reporter & feature writer also with several books behind her, and a number of widely published poets, article writers, and juvenile authors. The quality of the contributors was distinctly up.

Without the help of Prof. Carroll S. Towle, the director, additionally working as a full time member of the staff, we would have been embarrassingly short-handed in the short-story field. Last year besides Bill & Elva, Joan Ranson served full time and Carroll part time. This year with more than 75 mss. Bill was teamed only with Marguerite Smith, fiction editor for MADEMOISELLE, and, of course, Carroll, who was slightly busy running the Conference; for Elva was holding the fort here. Her work as poetry critic for WCS increases steadily. So, what with reading 60 mss. and having 20 personal conferences, it was just impossible for Bill to sit in on any of the other conference meetings except his own, & one or two led by Elizabeth Yates. Without any doubt, these latter were among the highlights of the Conference. Miss Yates in the juvenile field brings to bear rare personal charm, practical experience and rich teaching ability. Don't fail to sit at her feet, if you ever get the opportunity.

In one of the evening lectures it was the privilege of Loring E. Williams, editor and publisher of AMERICAN WEAVE, and William E. Harris to pay tribute to the memory of Sarah Ofne Jewett, New England writer. Loring has reprinted her poems, and last month REWRITE reprinted a memorable letter that she wrote to Willis Cather. It made a considerable impression, when read at the Conference.

THE DURHAM CHAP BOOK

This year's winner of the prize offered by the publishers of AMERICAN WEAVE and REWRITE each year to a poet at the UNH Conference—was Margaret Cobb, editorial assistant to the man. ed., D. Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.

REWRITE

BOOKS FOR WRITERS

WRITING & SELLING FEATURE ARTICLES. Helen M. Patterson. Prentice-Hall, Inc. \$5.35. Probably the largest and most authoritative book in the field, this title has been revised to include a section on magazine feature writing. It is a product of the practical experience of teaching feature writing at the University of Wisconsin's School of Journalism, where the students have been averaging a total of up to \$10,000 a year in sales. A high price is justified by the very specific professional help and the exceedingly extensive lists of reference books which show a writer where he can get needed information quickly. (It does not seriously detract from these lists, that we found some errors, and omissions.) A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

WILLA CATHER ON WRITING. Foreword by Stephen Tennant. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.25. This is a lovely book, from the author's own critical studies down through the poetic essay by the English poet and artist, Stephen Tennant, to the vital typography based on designs by W. A. Dwiggins. It is a slender book to slip for palpable phrases freighted with meaning for you. And there is a deal of wisdom, and practical insight born of Miss Cather's experience as a distinguished writer. Most of all, there shines through the imperturbable and unbreakable integrity of Willa Cather as an artist and a great human being. The things she admired and respected will do any writer good in every age for years to come. You should read it. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

THE QUINTESSENCE OF G.B.S. Edited by Stephen Winsten. Creative Age Press. \$3.75. Illustrating how one book can be a gathering, another a tearing from their context, these "scintillating" witticisms and kernels lack the practical values contained in the previous volume just reviewed. They are delightfully amusing, but one could become ill from too much eating as with green apples. Shaw is a true and sensitive writer. Therefore, his words belong in the frame in which they were set for a purpose, not in this miscellaneous, though well organized, rag-bag. The perennial Shavian fear that his works might be used as school books, and so run the risk of being "disliked" by readers, comes near, very near to realization here.

COMICS IN THE LAW. Lyman E. Cook. Universal Publishers. \$1. Anthology. The title has a misleading turn to it because the book consists of quotations of confused and ridiculous laws that the author, a lawyer, gathered for his radio program over KMOX and CBS. There is also anecdotal comment by Mr. Cook. It is amusing and possibly valuable as reference material. Illustrations not good.

THE ART OF READABLE WRITING. Rudolph Flesch. Harper & Brothers. \$3.00. This book is supplementary to the author's earlier one, "THE ART OF PLAIN TALK". It discusses in greater

detail and with more precision the methods, organizational procedures and results of the task of writing so that readers can readily understand what you are trying to put over. Every writer, who wishes to pursue his profession with the fullest possible efficiency, should read this book. In all my years as a writer and critic, I've known only perhaps three or four writers with apparently a complete mastery of words as tools. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

A WRITER'S NOTEBOOK. W. Somerset Maugham... Doubleday & Co. \$4.00. This is not the easiest book in the world to read. It has little continuity except for the passage of the element of Time. There are comments only at long intervals by the author, who serves as his own editor. The values all develop in a deductive manner from the overtones and implications. And these perforce are all sifted through the cosmopolitan culture and personality of W. Somerset Maugham. Yet I find the interest of this book high. It is a similar book to Kenneth Roberts', "I Wanted to Write".

THE WRITER ON HIS ART. Ed. by Walter Allen. Whittlesey House. \$3.50. (Oct. 14) Not yet received. Contributions by 70 great authors. An English book republished over here.

Buy your books through the--WRITERS' BOOK CLUB. Purchase of 6 books earns you a "book dividend". Most of these books are available also through the WCS Circulating Library--a non-profit lending library. (Dues: \$2 yearly plus postage both ways.) It gives you an opportunity to examine books you may desire for your own library at nominal cost.

DON'T SELL YOURSELF "SHORT"

We received a card from a music company in San Antonio, Texas, asking writers to submit "complete songs" with an appraisal fee of 50c. Writers are asked to sell their songs "outright", if the company following an appraisal by a "local company," decides to make any offer.

This does not sound like a legitimate offer to us. And in any case, a writer should never, never sell anything that could have a perennial value, for an outright sum. There are many anecdotes about playwrights, songwriters and others who signed away a mighty fortune because they did not know better or needed the money badly. Also, be suspicious of a firm that asks such a reading fee.

REPORT ON "WRITERS ON WRITING"

The WRITERS' BOOK CLUB has done exceptionally well with the UNH Conference Handbook. We did not try to sell it in competition against the UNH Conference's bookshop, which was selling it for the benefit of the "C.S. Towle Scholarship Fund". But following a big pre-publication order, we have re-ordered 6 times and have sold a lot of copies.

REWRITE

NEWS OF THE WRITERS' BOOK CLUB

The WRITERS' BOOK CLUB had one of its best sales at the UNH Conference this year. Not only did our extensive display of books for writers encourage many orders, but the fact that WRITERS' BOOK CLUB sales make possible development of other WCS projects: REWRITE, the WCS Circulating Library, the WCS Scholarship Fund, etc., resulted in many members of the Conference joining the WBC and placing a sheaf of orders for general books. We are proud of the fact that our WBC & library help to make books available in communities where there are neither bookshops nor public libraries.

THE MONTH'S SELECTIONS

THE ART OF READABLE WRITING. Rudolph Flesch. \$3. An important book for writers who would like to make words serve them.

WILLIA CATHER ON WRITING. \$2.25. Thoughts of a serious craftsman upon her own and others' work. A book to enjoy and ponder. Readable.

A WRITER'S NOTEBOOK. W. Somerset Maugham. \$4. Not an essential book, but one to read for a general picture of the mind of a successful and very competent writer.

WRITE FOR TRADE JOURNALS. W.R. Harrison. \$4.85. About a specialized subject, but it is good stuff for all non-fiction writers. Thorough.

THE ART OF MODERN FICTION. Ed. by Ray West & Robert W. Stallman. \$3.50. Anthology of the Quality type short & long fiction, with analyses of certain stories. Interesting selections. A very popular title.

HUMAN NATURE OF PLAYWRITING. Samson Raphaelson. \$4. (Oct. 18) We haven't seen a copy of this book yet. But it is based on a seminar given by one of the best Broadway authors of light comedy. Should be excellent.

WRITING & SELLING SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLES. Patterson & Hyde. \$5.35. This is a new edition of a standard and outstanding non-fiction book, based on courses at the Univ. of Wisconsin School of Journalism. Very practical and used by many professionals.

CONTINUED RECOMMENDATIONS

ARTICLE WRITING & MARKETING. Geo. I. Bird. \$5.50. One of the best analyses of the twin jobs of writing & selling non-fiction. Very practical and detailed in its approach.

WRITERS ON WRITING. Ed. by Herschel Brickell. Chapters by Carroll S. Towle, William E. Harris, Esther Forbes and others. \$3.00. Handbook by members of the staff at the University of N. H. Conference. It covers most of the fields of writing and is being adopted, although published less than 6 months, by a large number of schools and colleges.

WRITING—From Idea to Printed Page. \$5.95. A casebook of actual SEP features and stories.

WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY. \$6. No better dictionary for the price exists.

PIOT DIGEST. Kobold Knight. \$6. This is the best book on Plotting we know about. We are exclusive agents for it and it is proving a real best seller. Sound and practical.

THE WRITERS HANDBOOK. \$4.50. The most reliable market list in book form available. It has 69 articles of great value also.

BOOKS OF PERMANENT VALUE

CRAFT OF THE SHORT STORY. Richard Summers. \$5.50. A realistic, factual book on techniques of writing and being a writer. Summers talks the language of writers. You'll like it.

WRITE THE SHORT SHORT. Maren Elwood. \$3.50
CHARACTERS MAKE YOUR STORY. Each.
111 DONTS FOR WRITERS. \$2.95. 3 good books.

STORY WRITING. Edith Mirrielees. \$3. One of the all-time best books by a great teacher.

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF VERSE. Robert Hillier. \$2. A basic book for all poets by a good poet.

MAGAZINE ARTICLE WRITING. Brennecke & Clark. \$3.90. A Columbia University book. Emphasis on magazine feature writing. Excellent.

A MANUAL OF STYLE. Univ. of Chi. Press. \$4. The style book that editors use. Helps you with many problems of getting words down on the printed page, & standard usage.

WRITING JUVENILE FICTION. Phyllis A. Whitney. \$2.50. A successful author tells how.

WRITING FOR CHILDREN. Berry & Best. Another practical book by authors who sell in their special field. It applies to adult work, too.

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